

Meeting with State Legislators

Here are some suggestions for meeting with your state legislators. The same principles apply for meetings with local and federal officials. For more information on how government bodies relate to MSU Extension, see the [Expect to Connect tool “Know Your Government Bodies and How They Relate to MSU Extension.”](#)



Making the appointment

- For contact information on your state senator or representative, go to <https://www.legislature.mi.gov>.
- Make contact with the office staff person who schedules appointments. A phone call is preferable, although some offices may also schedule via email.
 - Although it is sometimes possible to make an appointment a day or two before you wish to meet with a legislator, try to schedule appointments one or two weeks in advance.
 - Legislators' schedules change often. Handle last-minute cancellations with grace, and be prepared to meet with a legislative aide instead.
- When you make the appointment, briefly and clearly state your purpose.

Example: My name is ... from ... and I work with ... in the area of ... I would like to meet briefly with Representative ... when I am in Lansing next Thursday to talk to them about
- Emphasize that you either are a constituent in the policymaker's district or calling on behalf of work being done with or for the policymaker's local constituents.
- Expect that the appointment will be 15 minutes in length, although sometimes a conversation will last longer or an appointment may be shortened because of a sudden caucus or committee meeting.
- If you are unable to schedule a meeting with the legislator at the time you are available, ask if you can speak with a staff member. If this is not possible, at least make a point of stopping by the office during your time in Lansing. This will give you an opportunity to meet someone in the office. It is also possible that schedules change and that you end up meeting with a legislator or staffer.



Preparing for the meeting

- Familiarize yourself concerning the background and interests of the policymaker. What are their interests? What are their committee assignments? What kind of contact has this person had related to your organization, business or interests? Gather more information using the Expect to Connect [“Know Your Policymakers and Stakeholders”](#) form.



The *Expect to Connect Toolkit* has a variety of tools to help you prepare and plan for your visit with legislators and other policymakers and stakeholders. Find the toolkit at https://www.canr.msu.edu/od/strategic_connections_communications/.

- If you are meeting to discuss a specific concern, try to compile a one-page or less written summary to leave with the policymaker and particularly with the legislative staff members.
- Know where your legislator stands on key issues. Use the website “Project Vote Smart” (<https://www.votesmart.org>), published by an independent, nonpartisan organization, that allows you to easily search for your legislator and their voting record by topic area.

During the meeting

- Introduce yourself using your [personal public value statement](#), briefly summarizing what you do and why this issue is important to you and the community you serve.
- Be prepared to explain your concern briefly and clearly. Don’t argue and don’t criticize opponents. Concentrate on how the issue affects you and the community you serve.



After the meeting

- Be sure to follow up after your appointment with a thank-you email and any pertinent materials. You may include a brief note with any additional information that was requested in your meeting, suggestions for further interaction or both.
- Complete the MSU Extension Strategic Connection Survey to document this meeting. This information is shared with the MSU Extension Director’s Office and used to help coordinate interactions with policymakers across the organization. The survey can be accessed online at extension.msu.edu/connections.



Additional opportunities

- Sign up to receive email newsletters and updates from your state senator and representative.
- Follow your state senator and representative on social media.
- Participate in local coffee hours, town halls or other local events.
- Stay up to date on local events by regularly reviewing their webpages and social media communications.

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